

Warfighting – Week 6
MARINE CORPS DOCTRINAL PUBLICATION (MCDP) 3
EXPEDITIONARY OPERATIONS
FACULTY SPOOL GUIDE

1. Purpose and Overview

This guided discussion allows students to discuss current Marine Corps doctrine for the conduct of expeditionary operations. Students will be exposed to how the Marine Corps—as an expeditionary force in readiness—is manned, trained, and equipped specifically to respond to a broad variety of crises and conflicts across the full range of military operations anywhere in the world. MCDP 3 emphasizes the naval character of Marine Corps forces as well as underscores the value of Marine Corps forces as a highly cost-effective option in a wide range of situations, including crises that require forcible entry.

2. Method

Discuss the issues for consideration with your seminar students.

3. Endstate

A MAGTF officer must have a firm foundation in Marine Corps doctrine. Expeditionary operations are the reason for the existence of the U.S. Marines. Therefore, the endstate for this portion of the EWS DEP course is for the students to understand and be able to articulate expeditionary doctrine as promulgated in MCDP 3.

4. Faculty Requirements

Read MCDP 3, *Expeditionary Operations*.

5. Issues for Consideration

a. What is the new anarchy threat as discussed in MCDP 3?

The New Anarchy states that the Cold War provided a known enemy whom we thought we understood fairly well and against whom we could prepare. The geopolitical situation between the United States and the Soviet Union shifted from a bipolar structure to multiple regional power centers with a single world power, the United States. Now the U.S.'s opponents include both the same traditional nation-states (e.g., China, Iraq, Iran, Libya) and many nonstate actors (e.g., terrorist groups, international organized crime networks). The U.S.'s political, economic, and military dominance will lead many potential adversaries to adopt asymmetrical methods that avoid our material and technological superiority and exploit our perceived weaknesses.

b. How do we prepare and respond to the various categories of crisis: disaster, disruption, and dispute?

In the coming years, the ability to respond effectively and quickly to crises will be essential to the protection of U.S. interests. Crises that will threaten U.S. interests in the near future fall into three broad categories: disasters, disruptions, and disputes.

The intent here is not to try to categorize every type of political crisis. The point is simply that in a broad range of situations potentially threatening to U.S. interests, the actual or contemplated commitment of U.S. military forces will arise. The actual U.S. response will depend on the situation.

c. What are the differences between major regional contingencies and smaller-scale contingencies?

i. *Major Regional Contingency (MRC)*

An MRC is at the high end of the range of potential crises that the United States may face. At some time another power—whether an existing state, a new state, an alliance of states, or some other political entity—is likely to rise up to challenge the U.S. on roughly equal military or other terms. Several regional powers hostile to the U.S. maintain large militaries with offensive capabilities in relatively high states of readiness. Several regional powers possess weapons of mass destruction.

ii. *Smaller-Scale Contingency*

Smaller-scale contingencies involve military operations other than war. Environmental disasters, insurrections, separatist movements, rebellions, coups, genocide, and general societal and governmental collapses generate violence and instability that may not lead to MRCs but nonetheless threaten U.S. interests. U.S. commitment may include civil support, counter drug operations, peace-building, peacekeeping, counterinsurgency, and noncombatant evacuation operations. Conversely, smaller-scale contingencies frequently involve clashes with unconventional military or paramilitary organizations: criminals, militias, guerrillas, and terrorists. These unconventional forces are likely to employ unconventional weapons and techniques that provide a challenging asymmetrical response to a superior conventional capability.

d. How have population trends and urbanized terrain impacted the Marine Corps warfighting concepts?

i. *Population Factors*

Conflict often arises where there is discontent, where conditions are in flux, and where resources are in short supply. Uncontrolled population growth in Asia, Africa, and Latin America is expected. Rapid population growth will likely lead to two demographic phenomena: urbanization and “youth bulge.”

(a) *Urbanization*. As the population continues to grow, more people will move to the cities, and those people will compete for already scarce resources. As much as 90 percent of the world’s population growth is expected to occur in the developing world’s cities.

(b) *Youth Bulge*. A rapidly increasing population becomes proportionately younger than a stable population. This phenomenon stresses governments in two ways: (1) Children are relatively unproductive members of society; they are consumers rather than producers. (2) Youth in many cultures are impatient for change and thus are more likely to favor radical, even violent, solutions to societal problems.

ii. *Urbanized Terrain*

The developing world's cities are not the organized, high-rise cities of the industrialized world. The urban terrain in these developing world cities favors the defender over the attacker. Urbanized terrain favors the use of ground forces, especially infantry, because the employment of armor, artillery, and close-air support is often restricted.

e. **What are expeditionary operations? Discuss various examples.**

Expeditionary Operations Defined and Discussed

An expedition is a military operation conducted by an armed force to accomplish a specific objective in a foreign country. Expeditionary operations involve the establishment of a forward base—on either land or sea—from which to project power. In some instances an armed force may have to establish its presence in the face of hostile resistance or “forcible entry.”

Power projection does not imply that expeditionary operations are always offensive in nature. Desert Shield was defensive in nature until it transitioned into Desert Storm, an offensive operation. An expeditionary force does not always need to be focused on ground combat. The combat service support element (CSSE) is the likely main effort for a disaster relief operation. Expeditionary operations can range from full-scale combat to non-combat missions. Expeditionary implies a temporary duration with the intent to withdraw once the mission is accomplished. Expeditionary also implies that force protection and intelligence prevail over administrative, quality-of-life, or other considerations. Expeditionary requires a special mindset—one that is constantly prepared for immediate deployment overseas into austere operation environments, bringing everything necessary to accomplish the mission.

The following are examples of expeditionary operations:

- Desert Storm
- Operation Enduring Freedom
- Operation Iraqi Freedom

f. **What are strategic mobility and operational mobility? Discuss various examples.**

i. *Strategic Mobility: Closure Rate and Global Reach*

Closure rate refers to how quickly a military force can close on an objective area after being tasked. Reach refers to the geographical limits to which a force can deploy and sustain credible military power. The Marine Corps gains its strategic mobility from its naval character. The Marine Corps sustains its strategic mobility in three ways: forward deployment of MAGTFs, prepositioning of equipment and supplies at sea, and the rapid deployment of units by sea and air.

ii. *Operational Mobility (OM)*

Operational mobility is the capability of military forces to move from engagement to other actions within the context of the campaign. Strategic mobility is the ability to move from theater to theater. Tactical mobility is the ability to move in combat. The Marine Corps achieves OM in several possible ways: amphibious shipping, assault support aircraft, landing craft, assault amphibious vehicles, and light-armored vehicles.

g. How does the structure of the MAGTF support expeditionary operations?

MAGTFs are organized, trained, and equipped to perform forward-presence, crisis-response, and full-scale combat missions. MAGTFs can perform missions ranging from humanitarian operations to peacekeeping to intense combat and can operate in permissive, uncertain, and hostile environments. They can operate from sea or expeditionary bases or both. Every MAGTF consists of a command element (CE), ground combat element (GCE), aviation combat element (ACE), and combat service support element (CSSE).

6. Chapter 1: The Landscape: Chaos in the Littorals

Chapter 1 discusses the environment in which U.S. forces in general, and Marine Corps expeditionary forces in particular, have to operate. It describes a world characterized by disorder and crisis, especially in the littoral regions of the developing world. While arguably threats to national security have decreased in magnitude, they have increased in number, frequency, and variety. We see established nation-states across the globe splintering along ethnic, religious, and tribal lines. Chapter 1 consists of many subchapters that are intertwined under the guise of the “After the Cold War: The ‘New Anarchy’” heading. (See question 5a, above.)

a. Crisis: Disaster, Disruption, Dispute

Crises that threaten United States interest fall into three broad categories: disasters, disruptions, and disputes.

- i. *Disasters* are accidents or calamities—complex human emergencies—that cause suffering on a massive scale. Disasters may be manmade or natural. Manmade disasters include nuclear or other industrial accidents, economic failures, and catastrophic governmental collapse. Natural disasters include hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, floods, droughts, plagues, epidemics, and wildfires.
- ii. *Disruptions* are intentionally disorderly activities that cause internal commotion on a scale sufficient to interfere with a government’s ability to perform. Disruptions are always manmade and the result of human intent. Disruptions include genocide, terrorism, insurgency, drug trafficking, and epidemic crime. Disruptions may stem from sectarianism, nationalism, racism, religious differences, or extreme poverty. Disasters can lead to disruptions if the government cannot respond to the suffering of its people.
- iii. *Disputes* are a clash between political groups. A disruption may escalate into a dispute when the disruptive element becomes powerful enough to openly challenge the established government rather than to merely subvert its authority.

b. Fragmentation and Integration

Two primary forces that drive changes in our global politics are the simultaneous processes of fragmentation and integration.

- i. *Fragmentation* refers to the breakup of multination states into smaller, more natural national groups with narrower communities of interests.
- ii. *Integration* refers to how countries are becoming increasingly connected economically through the rise in global markets. This trend results largely from

advances in communications technologies that provide both near-instantaneous worldwide transfer of capital and access to goods and services.

c. Major Regional Contingency (MRC)

See question 5c, above.

d. Smaller-Scale Contingencies

See question 5c, above.

e. Nonstate Actors

Nonstate groups are most likely to have significant influence in smaller-scale contingencies. Nonstate groups are likely to not abide by the laws and conventions of warfare recognized by the states. They will probably adopt methods intended to counter the conventional material and technological superiority of the United States because they cannot compete in conventional military terms.

f. The Developing World

The developing world is defined as those regions afflicted by drought, disease, and ethnic hatred. Developing countries often lack the military might to resist outside invasion or insurrection from within. Thus, it is in the developing world that American forces will most likely find themselves committed to protect U.S. national interest. The lack of modern or developed infrastructure can pose significant problems for military action in the developing world.

g. Population Factors

See question 5d, above.

h. Urbanized Terrain

See question 5d, above.

i. The Importance of the Sea and the Littoral Regions

Sixty percent of the world's population lives within 100 kilometers of the ocean. Most cities with a population greater than one million are located in the littorals. Growth rates of coastal cities in the developing world exceed the growth rates in surrounding rural regions. As the range at which naval forces can project power inland increases, an increasingly larger portion of the globe falls under the potential influence of U.S. naval power.

j. Weaponry

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) is a huge concern. Chemical and probably biological weapons are more widespread than nuclear weapons, and their availability already extends beyond established governments to other political groups. Terrorist organizations are as likely to use WMD against civilian populations as they would against military populations. The other trend of concern is the increasing availability of inexpensive but lethal conventional weapons ranging from mines to rocket grenades to car bombs to shoulder-launched antiaircraft missiles.

7. Chapter 2: The Nature of Expeditionary Operations

Based on the wide variety of overseas crises and conflicts described in chapter 1, chapter 2 discusses the nature and requirements of expeditionary operations and the Marine Corps' role in and approach to their conduct. The preservation of national interest demands the ability to project military forces into foreign countries. The ability to respond quickly and effectively to the entire range of political crises anywhere in the world is the foundation of national military strategy. There will be numerous missions requiring expeditionary operations, but not all of these operations require a military response.

a. National Interests, Crisis Prevention, and Crisis Response

The national security strategy places our national interests into three categories: vital interests of broad, overriding importance to the survival, safety, and vitality of the U.S.; important interests that affect our national well being; and humanitarian interests. Therefore, the protection of these interests demands an effective prevention and/or crisis-response capability. The U.S. can either intervene or interpose.

- i. *Intervention* is the deliberate act of a nation or group of nations to introduce its military forces into the course of an existing controversy in order to influence events.
- ii. *Interposition* is the deliberate act of a nation to introduce military forces into a foreign country during a crisis to protect its citizens from harm without otherwise becoming involved in the course of the crisis.

b. Expeditionary Operations Defined and Discussed

See question 5e, above.

c. Reasons for Conducting Expeditionary Operations

Expeditionary operations will be required for a number of reasons, including the following:

- i. To ensure that policy objectives pursued by other means have in fact been secured.
- ii. To seize or control key physical objectives in order to ensure their safe use for all, to deny their use to an enemy or disruptive element, or to make them ready for follow-on forces.
- iii. To control urban or other restrictive terrain.
- iv. To establish a close, physical, and highly visible presence in order to demonstrate political resolve, deter aggressive action, or compel desired behavior.
- v. To establish and maintain order in an area beset by chaos and disorder.
- vi. To protect or rescue U.S. citizens or other civilians.
- vii. To separate warring groups from one another or from the population at large, especially when enemy or disruptive elements are embedded in the population.
- viii. To provide physical relief and assistance in the event of disaster.

d. Sequence in Projecting Expeditionary Forces

The projection of expeditionary forces generally occurs in the following order:

- i. *Pre-deployment actions* are information, operation, and intelligence decisions (e.g., counterintelligence, center of gravity).
- ii. *Deployment* is movement of forces and their equipment to area of responsibility.
- iii. *Entry* is initial introduction of forces onto foreign soil (e.g., seaborne, airborne).

- iv. *Enabling actions* are preparatory actions in order to facilitate accomplishment of the mission (e.g., seize the port, airfield, or other facility).
- v. *Decisive actions* are actions intended to create conditions that will accomplish the mission.
- vi. *Redeployment* is departure.

e. Expeditionary Mindset

An expeditionary mindset implies the versatility and adaptability to respond effectively to a broad variety of circumstances without a great deal of preparation time.

f. Naval Character

All Marine Corps forces are specifically organized, trained, and equipped to deploy aboard, operate, and sustain themselves from Navy vessels. They are specifically designed to project land combat power ashore from the sea.

g. Strategic Mobility: Closure Rate and Global Reach

See question 5f, above.

h. Operational Mobility (OM)

See question 5f, above.

i. Operational and Tactical Competence (OTC)

OTC refers to the consistent ability of the organization to effectively accomplish assigned missions and tasks. Experience is generally thought to be the most important factor in developing OTC. Competence requires leaders who can see beyond the tactical requirements of the immediate problem and who understand the larger implications of their decisions.

j. Sustainability

Sustainability is the ability to maintain the necessary level and duration of operational activities to achieve military objectives. The Marine Corps sustains itself from either land or sea base or a combination of both. Sea bases are usually more secure than land bases; however, one only needs to look at the Falkland Islands War to see that land bases can be more secure depending on the enemy's capabilities.

k. Adaptability

Adaptability is the ability to change tactics, techniques, and organizations in anticipation of or in response to changes to the situation. In an uncertain, chaotic world environment, adaptability is an essential characteristic of effective expeditionary operations. We can adapt through improvisation and innovation. We must remain flexible at all levels in order to exercise judgment and initiative on the basis of situational awareness rather than merely to follow orders.

l. Reconstitution

Reconstitution refers to the ability of an expeditionary force to regenerate, reorganize, replenish, and reorient itself for a new mission after employment elsewhere without having to return to home base. It is the ability to project expeditionary power anew from an existing expeditionary base or forward-deployed status. The MAGTF's nature helps us to reconstitute rapidly, and our naval character keeps us focused on being self-contained for just such reasons.

m. Cost Effectiveness

It is imperative as a general principle that military forces conduct expeditions as economically as possible. As with the military principle of economy of force, cost effectiveness here means accomplishing the mission with no greater cost of commitment than is necessary to accomplish the mission properly. Several factors contribute to our cost effectiveness: forward deployment of personnel, equipment, and supplies; regenerative ability; and our versatility.

8. Chapter 3: Expeditionary Organizations

Marine Corps forces are organized and equipped specifically to meet the requirements of expeditionary operations. These organizations possess the characteristics of versatility, flexibility, expandability, rapid deployability, sustainability, and reconstitutive ability necessary for expeditionary operations. The Marine air-ground task force (MAGTF), a modular task organization of air, ground, and logistics elements, is the Marine Corps' basic operating organization. MAGTFs can deploy rapidly as part of amphibious ready forces, maritime prepositioning forces, or air contingency forces. Coming in a variety of sizes and capabilities, MAGTFs provide the combatant commander or other operational commander with a responsive and adaptive expeditionary capability suitable of satisfying a broad range of operational needs.

a. Naval Expeditionary Forces (NEF)

NEFs are designed to project military power ashore from the sea, to include the establishment of a landing force on foreign soil if necessary, and thus operate in the littoral regions. Marine forces contribute landing forces to the Navy's attack aircraft, surface fire support, sea-launched cruise missiles, and special warfare forces.

b. Marine Corps Forces Commands

There are three: MARFORLANT, MARFORPAC, and MARFORRES. Both MARFORLANT and MARFORPAC provide amphibious forces, maritime prepositioning forces, and air contingency forces. They also provide Special MAGTFs on demand. MARFORRES is closely integrated with the active duty Marine forces. MARFORRES provides Selected Marine Corps Reserve (SMCR) units and individuals to the active duty Marine forces when directed by National Command Authorities (NCA) via the Marine Corps Commandant.

c. Marine Air-Ground Task Forces (MAGTF)

MAGTFs are organized, trained, and equipped to perform forward-presence, crisis-response, and full-scale combat missions. MAGTFs can perform missions ranging from humanitarian operations to peacekeeping to intense combat and can operate in permissive, uncertain, and hostile environments. They can operate from sea or expeditionary bases or both. Every MAGTF consists of a command element (CE), ground combat element (GCE), aviation combat element (ACE), and combat service support element (CSSE).

d. Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF)

The MEF is the principal Marine Corps warfighting organization. A MEF typically deploys with 60 days of sustainment.

e. Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable)

The MEU (SOC) is the standard forward-deployed Marine expeditionary organization. It generally deploys with 15 days of sustainment to the Mediterranean Sea, the western Pacific, the Indian Ocean, or the Persian Gulf region.

f. Special Purpose MAGTF (SPMAGTF)

The SPMAGTF may be formed to conduct a specific mission that is limited in scope, focus, and often in duration. SPMAGTFs can be any size, but generally they are small in scope. Common missions include raids, peacekeeping, noncombatant evacuation operations, disaster relief, and humanitarian assistance.

g. Maritime Prepositioning Forces (MPF)

There are three MPF squadrons. Each squadron contains equipment and 30 days worth of sustainment for up to 18,000 Marines. One MPF squadron is equal to roughly 3,000 airlift sorties. MPF ships can offload pier side or in stream. The ultimate usefulness of an MPF is its enormous flexibility.

h. Air Contingency Forces (ACF)

An air contingency MAGTF (ACM) is an on-call, combat-ready task organization that can begin deployment by strategic airlift within 18 hours of notification. ACM forces can deploy independently or in conjunction with an MEU (SOC). ACM forces, however, must deploy to their area of responsibility with all of the organic equipment they require. Furthermore, an ACM does not have an organic sustainment capability.

i. Marine Corps Component Commands

The Marine Corps component commander will deal directly with the joint task force commander (CJTF) in matters affecting assigned Marine forces. The CJTF may establish functional component commanders to conduct operations or employ them primarily to coordinate selected functions. Due to the unique nature of Marine Corps forces, the Marine Corps component commander may be designated as the joint force maritime, land, or air component commander. However, exercise of operational control through the Marine Corps component commander normally takes greater advantage of established chains of command, maintains the operational integrity of Marine Corps forces, exploits common service doctrine and operating methods, and facilitates the coordination of operating and support requirements.

9. Chapter 4: Expeditionary Concepts

This chapter describes the Marine Corps' fundamental operating concepts for the conduct of expeditionary operations: operational maneuver from the sea, sustained operations ashore, military operations other than war, and maritime prepositioning force operations. All of these expeditionary concepts are compatible with the fundamental Marine Corps doctrine of maneuver warfare.

Our capstone operational concept, operational maneuver from the sea, and its supporting concepts of sustained operations ashore and military operations other than war describe how MAGTFs will conduct expeditionary operations, both combat and noncombatant, in response to any contingency that may be in the national interest. The MPF concept describes an important and proven means by which capable MAGTFs can quickly respond to crises practically anywhere in the world within a matter of days.

Chapter 4 ties chapters 1 through 3 together with three practical case studies. Be sure to read the case studies for discussion points.